

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION  
Minutes of the 241st Meeting  
(Subject to approval at the 242nd Meeting)

Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center  
One Lodge Lane  
Oglesby, IL 61348

May 10, 2022, 10:00 a.m.  
In-person meeting with virtual WebEx option

241-1) **Call to Order, Roll Call, and Introduction of Attendees**

Commissioner Covington called the meeting to order at 10:00am and Todd Strole read the roll call.

Commissioners Present: George Covington, Dr. Pen DauBach, Donnie Dann, Deborah Stone, William McClain, Dr. David Thomas, Dr. Abigail Derby Lewis

Commissioners Absent: Dr. Jo-Elle Mogerman, Dr. Charles Ruffner

Commission Advisors Present: Dr. Eric Schaubert, Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS); Dr. Joyce Hofmann, Endangered Species Protection Board (ESPB)

Commission Consultants Present: Fran Harty; Randy Heidorn; Jim Herkert; Joe Roth

Others Present: John Rogner, Assistant Director, IDNR; Todd Strole, Valerie Njapa, Kelly Neal, John Griesbaum, Angella Moorehouse, Kim Roman, Sami Childerson, John Nelson, Debbie Newman, Byron Paulsen, Kevin Sierzega, Stacy Burkett, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC); Ann Holtrop, John Wilker, Dr. Leon Hinz, Jenny Skufca, Mark Alessi, Chip O’Leary, Roger Jansen, Natalia Maass, IDNR Division of Natural Heritage; Dawn Cobb, IDNR Office of Realty and Capital Planning; Amy Doll, Travis Neal, Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves; Paul Baits, Jill Kennay, Natural Land Institute (NLI); Kim Erndt-Pitcher, Prairie Rivers Network (PRN); Jim Johannsen, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation (JD CF); Jo Fessett, Illinois Audubon Society (IAS); Austin Omer; Holly Tuten; Katie Kucera; Katherine Accettura; Lindsay Keeney; Radhika Miraglia.

241-2) **Adoption of Agenda**

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and carried that the Agenda be adopted.

241-3) **Approval of Minutes for the 240<sup>th</sup> Meeting January 25, 2022**

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner McClain, and carried that the minutes from the 240<sup>th</sup> Meeting be approved.

Commissioner Covington read the following:

At the 240th Meeting of the INPC, held on January 25, 2022, at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Springfield, Illinois, legal protection was completed by the Commission for eight tracts of land totaling 488.14 acres. Six of the eight tracts are privately owned, and the other two are publicly owned. The organizations that own the private sites donated the value of the protection agreements to the public. Lands protected include the Addition to Embarras Ridges Land and Water Reserve; Warbler Bluff Land and Water Reserve; Cut Off Road Addition to Cedar Glen Land and Water Reserve; Buffer Addition to Brewster Creek Marsh Nature Preserve; Rutherford Refuge at Twin Bridges Nature Preserve; Chandler Buffer Addition to Skokie River Nature Preserve; Gremel Wildlife Sanctuary Nature Preserve; and Buffer Addition to Boloria Fen and Sedge Meadow Nature Preserve.

Protection of these lands came about because the Commission had eight staff in the field working with private and public landowners. There are 414 dedicated nature preserves totaling 62,270 acres; and there are 202 registered land and water reserves totaling 56,151 acres.

241-4) **Next meeting date and location**

242 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting	September 13, 2022	Olney Central College
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241-5) **INPC Staff Report**

**APPENDIX I**

REPORT  
Todd Strole, Executive Director  
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Remarks presented by Executive Director Todd Strole are provided in Attachment 1.

The full INPC report is provided in Appendix I.

On the potential IDOT-funded position to work on rights-of-way as described above, Commissioner Derby Lewis commented that coordination with the University of Illinois – Chicago Rights-of Way group might be prudent.

Commissioner Covington extended his personal thanks to Commissioners Dann, Stone, and McClain for their service to the Commission over so many years. They will be missed and at the September meeting, something more formal will be done in recognition of their service.

241-6) **Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves Report**  
Amy Doll, Director  
Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

**APPENDIX II**

The full report shared by Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves is attached as Appendix II.

Commissioner Covington commented that the Friends have done a remarkable job in such a short amount of time and congratulated them.

Commissioner Derby Lewis made a comment supporting the use of a compelling visualization to tell the story of the Nature Preserves Commission, with illustrations, interactive maps, etc. There are many creative ways to develop data-driven storytelling that can be geared toward a certain goal and audience.

Commissioner Stone suggested using a GIS story map.

Commissioner DauBach commented on the need to get the attention of media outlets, including newspapers, websites, and TV.

241-7) **IDNR Staff Report**  
REPORT  
Ann Holtrop, Chief  
Division of Natural Heritage

**APPENDIX III**

The full IDNR report is attached as Appendix III.

Commissioner Covington asked if IDNR has an organizational chart that could be shared with the Commission.

Ann answered that she would be happy to look into that.

Commissioner Covington and Ann agreed that a presentation on the INAI and natural areas preservation process would be helpful at a future meeting, especially with new Commissioners beginning their terms soon.

241-8) **Endangered Species Protection Board Report**  
REPORT  
Dr. Joyce Hofmann  
Endangered Species Protection Board

**APPENDIX IV**

The full ESPB report is attached as Appendix IV.

Joyce shared that the May 20, 2022, ESPB meeting would be held in Springfield.

The summer of 2025 is the next time there will be an updated listing for threatened and endangered species for Illinois.

241-9) **Jo Daviess Co. – Dick Dvorak Addition to Apple River Canyon Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Angella Moorehouse presented this agenda item.

Approval for registration was requested for the Dick Dvorak Addition to Apple River Canyon Land and Water Reserve (LWR) consisting of 225.25 acres, owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The addition lies east of the existing Apple River Canyon LWR (#81). The original registration of 182 acres occurred in 2003 (Resolution 1696) followed by these additions:

- In 2010, 85.09 and 34.44 acres (Resolutions 2095 and 2096)
- In 2012, 104.71 acres (Resolution 2162)
- In 2021, 147.74 acres (Resolution 2496)

Apple River Canyon LWR lies within the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division of Illinois. While the addition has not yet been added to the adjacent Apple River Canyon Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI ) Site (#1069), it does qualify as Category II, supporting three listed plant species: the State-endangered White Camas (*Zigadenus elegans*), the State-threatened Cliff Goldenrod (*Solidago sciaphila*), and the State-endangered American Brooklime (*Veronica americana*). The State-threatened Ozark Minnow (*Notropis nubilus*) has been found in the Apple River near the addition. Registration of the Dick Dvorak Addition will increase the size of Apple River Canyon LWR from 553.98 to 779.23 acres. This LWR is part of a 1700-acre complex of contiguous lands along the Apple River in conservation ownership, including Apple River Canyon Nature Preserve (441.51 acres) and additional tracts owned by IDNR. At least 12 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), as identified by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP), are known to utilize the Apple River Canyon LWR, including seven birds, two fish, and three invertebrates. The protection and management of this LWR addresses goals within the Forest and Woodland, Streams, and Invasive Species Campaigns of the IWAP.

Commissioner McClain asked about dolomite hill prairies with respect to them being recognized on the INAI list because it is important that they be recognized. He was glad to see this addition brought forward for protection.

Commissioners Thomas and Dann provided positive comments on the strategies designed to add qualifying parcels such as this one, to the land and water reserve. This reserve design strengthens the INPC system and the protections it provides.

It was also noted that there are still unprotected parcels along the Apple River corridor that may qualify as additions, and Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation mentioned they are working on this in anticipation of securing protection in the future.

It was moved by Commissioner Dann, seconded by Commissioner McClain, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of the Dick Dvorak Addition to Apple River Canyon as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 9 of the Agenda for the 241st Meeting.

(Resolution 2559)

241-10) **LaSalle Co. – Fox River Bend Land and Water Reserve, Registration**

Kim Roman presented this agenda item.

The Conservation Foundation (TCF) holds a conservation easement on approximately 109 acres of land known as Fox River Bend. It is owned by the First National Bank of Ottawa, as Trustee, and is located along the lower Fox River INAI Site (#1444). Fox River Bend lies within the Grand Prairie Section of the Grand Prairie Natural Division of Illinois. The site is composed of dry-mesic upland forest, wet floodplain forest, and prairie plantings. The landowner, a private family trust, wishes to further protect the natural features of this property by registering in perpetuity 43 acres as a land and water reserve. The proposed Fox River Bend Land and Water Reserve includes a 0.7-mile stretch of riverbank along the Fox River, and its terrestrial communities support numerous wildlife SGCN. Allowable uses include camping in designated areas, bank fishing, campfires, and maintenance of trails and a kayak/canoe landing. Registration of this natural area will legally protect this habitat in perpetuity and add to the acreage protected along the lower Fox River corridor. Approval for registration of Fox River Bend Land and Water Reserve was requested.

Commissioner Thomas asked Kim if there is long-term temperature data for the Fox River.

Kim answered that we would need to consult with IDNR's Fisheries Division but believes there may be available temperature data.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Dann, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval for the registration of Fox River Bend as an Illinois land and water reserve, as described in the proposal presented under Item 10 of the Agenda for the 241st Meeting.

(Resolution 2560)

241-11) **Jackson Co. – Possum Trot Nature Preserve, Final Dedication**

Kevin Sierzega presented this agenda item.

The Bates family, owners of Possum Trot Farm LLC, requested final dedication of 78 acres of nature preserve (NP) and two acres of NP buffer as the Possum Trot NP in northwestern Jackson County, Illinois. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) granted

preliminary approval at the 240th meeting (Resolution #2551). Possum Trot NP lies within the Greater Shawnee Hills Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Division of Illinois. The proposed 80-acre NP consists of forest natural communities intersected by Reed's Creek and surrounding steep sandstone bluffs. It will permanently protect 60 acres of the currently unprotected 127-acre Reed's Creek Canyon North INAI site #583, designated for Category VI: unusual concentration of vascular flora. The sandstone cliff community is listed as an exceptional feature. Dedication of these lands supports the IWAP by permanently protecting natural lands that help maintain population viability of native species, including at least 12 confirmed breeding SGCN; by managing these associated habitats to benefit native species; and through ensuring a permanent habitat corridor exists for the adaptation and adjustments of native species to future landscape and environmental changes. The preserve resides within the Hill Prairie Corridor – South Section Conservation Opportunity Area. Within the two acres of NP buffer located along the north boundary of the NP, the landowner reserves the right to maintain a 1.5-acre old field community directly south of the house as a native prairie planting and the right to maintain two pre-existing structures on the property.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants final approval for the dedication of Possum Trot as an Illinois nature preserve and nature preserve buffer, as described in the proposal presented under Item 11 of the Agenda for the 241st Meeting.

(Resolution 2561)

241-12) **Prairie Rivers Network - Summary of Herbicide Drift Monitoring Report**

Kim Erndt-Pitcher presented this agenda item.

Prairie Rivers Network is compiling a report for the INPC to provide background information and a summary of monitoring efforts by different agencies and organizations to document off-target impacts to the State's natural areas, attributed to particle drift and/or vapor drift from herbicide application on surrounding agricultural lands. This includes INPC-protected sites where injuries to trees, other woody plants, and herbaceous plants have been observed and documented. The report will evaluate the different monitoring programs and data collection, discuss the ecological implications associated with widespread herbicide drift, and offer recommendations for future efforts.

Several questions were asked with a focus on the pattern of drift, distance from cropland to natural areas, and whether symptoms are largely suspected to be related to vapor drift or particle drift at sites monitored by PRN.

Kim provided a response to these questions during the meeting, indicating that everything is close to crop fields if you look at land use maps. After the meeting, she followed up to clarify and to provide a more accurate response:

“Monitored sites vary in their proximity to cropland from being directly adjacent to cropland to sites approximately 1 mile from cropland. Few rural sites actually afford any isolation from agricultural land greater than ½ mile. To avoid edge effects associated with particle drift or exposures associated with root uptake when monitored properties are adjacent to cropped land, PRN typically does not include symptoms observed in zones in close proximity to the cropland in monitoring results. PRN typically monitors as large an area as practicable with an emphasis on areas at distance from edges. It does typically track monitoring distances, both near and far, from any potential source of drift to the monitored area and whether evidence of direct exposures at edges (when present) are indicated. PRN data indicate, regardless of cropland juxtaposition, in most cases the likely cause of herbicide exposure symptoms is vapor drift.”

Commissioner Derby Lewis asked what can be done from a legal standpoint to address herbicide drift injury to natural areas.

Todd Strole answered that the Illinois Department of Agriculture holds the authority to enforce compliance of herbicide use under the Illinois Pesticides Act and a misuse determination can result in a warning or monetary fine.

With the final report to be completed by the end of June 2022, Commissioner Covington commented that any approval action request would come at a future meeting.

241-13) **Signature Authority for INPC Executive Director and Staff**

Todd Strole presented this agenda item.

At the INPC’s January 2016 meeting, signature authority was addressed for Commission staff in the absence of an Executive Director, withdrawing some authorities to be retained with the Chair of the Commission (Resolution #2352). With the recent hiring of Todd Strole as the Executive Director, it is recommended that signature authority for staff be addressed. Similar to past practice, it is suggested that signature authority be granted to the INPC Executive Director for mutual agreements, NAAF land acquisition site approval, any required IRS documents on behalf of the INPC acknowledging the receipt of a donation in the form of dedications or easements, letters and memorandums representing the INPC comments on Consultation/CERP reviews, and approval of permits and land management on behalf of the Commission and other ministerial functions. The Executive Director may further delegate the authority for comments on Consultation/CERP reviews to the Nature Preserves Defense Project Manager. Similarly, the Executive Director may further delegate the authority for permit approvals, routine management plans and routine stewardship activities to the Stewardship Project Manager. Routine activities are defined as those activities that are approved by administrative rule or consistent with INPC Guidelines or those activities that have been approved a minimum of three times by the Commission for specific sites. This is consistent with current practice.

It was moved by Commissioner Thomas, seconded by Commissioner Dann, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission grants approval of signature authority for INPC Executive Director and Staff, as described in the proposal presented under Item 13 of the Agenda for the 241st Meeting.

(Resolution 2562)

241-14) **Review of Closed Meeting Minutes**

Todd Strole presented this agenda item.

In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, Commissioners must review closed minutes at least twice a year to determine if they must remain closed. The following meetings had closed minutes and need to be reviewed: August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; September 10, 2013; and September 10, 2019.

It was moved by Commissioner McClain, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, that the following resolution be approved:

The Commission agrees that the closed meeting minutes from August 2, 2005; May 2, 2006; May 6, 2008; May 5, 2009; May 7, 2013; September 10, 2013; and September 10, 2019 remain closed, as described and in accordance with Item 14 of the Agenda for the 241st Meeting.

(Resolution 2563)

241-15) **Public Comment Period (3 minutes per person)**

Paul Baits, President of NLI's Board of Trustees, addressed the Commissioners about the threat to Bell Bowl Prairie INAI site from the proposed Rockford Airport Authority's expansion projects.

At the January 25, 2022, INPC meeting, NLI proposed to IDNR that, instead of going to the legislature to change the law, they make changes to the administrative rule to outline how the consultation process works and to make the process more robust/meaningful. In response to NLI's proposal, Todd Strole stated that INPC would appoint staff to assist IDNR in making changes to the administrative rule.

Mr. Baits requested information on the status of these efforts and to see if staff were assigned to this task.

Todd Strole answered that he assigned himself to work with IDNR on administrative rule changes for the consultation process.



241-16) **Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

241-17) **Adjournment**

Commissioner McClain motioned to adjourn. It was seconded by Commissioner Dann and approved.

The INPC 241<sup>st</sup> Meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

**Attachment 1**  
**Remarks from INPC's Executive Director**

“Good Morning, Commissioners, and all in attendance today. As you know, I am only 5 months into the role of serving as the Executive Director for the Commission. However, in those 5 months, I have a much better understanding of the operational needs to successfully deliver our statutory mandates and mission than I did in January. Therefore, to start my report today, I would like to mention several actions being taken to address operational needs of Commission and its staff.

1. Exploring opportunities to increase INPC staff capacity including:
  - a. Submitted all paperwork required for posting the Area 1 Natural Areas Preservation Specialist in northwestern Illinois (this is the backfill of John Nelson prior to his move to Area 2).
  - b. Requested a Graduate Public Service Intern from the University of Illinois Springfield for the fall of 2022, reviewed applicants and selected candidates for interview.
  - c. Discussing the use of temporary contractual staff with IDNR Human Resources Office to help with a backlog of administrative needs.
  - d. Evaluating an IDOT funded contractual position that would serve as a liaison between agencies on road right-of-way sections adjacent to INPC sites, IDNR lands, INAI sites, and Endangered/Threatened species locations. There are more than 1500 of these locations so this is not insignificant and IDOT is willing to fund this position to ensure management is compatible with the needs of all agencies and protection of natural resources.
  - e. Made request to increase the hours of a part-time staff person.
2. Preparing a FY23 spending plan to justify a significant increase in our operational budget request that will address a backlog maintenance, equipment needs, and boundary surveys, among other things.
3. Met with and coordinating with IT staff to develop a network of connected databases to better serve our needs for annual reports on Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves. We could be more efficient if we are able to connect INPC and Heritage databases.
4. All INPC staff are working together to complete an effort started by Leon Hinz when he was acting Director to clear a six-year backlog of missing annual evaluations for all 12 staff members. This is a monumental task with more than 50 staff evaluations still needing to be completed.

In addition, staff continue to deliver an impressive amount our fundamental and routine work. For example:

5. There were 200 landowner contacts recorded during this reporting period. These include contacts with protected and unprotected natural areas. Landowner contacts occur with diversity of owners that range from an individual, to an estate, to a county park district, to a statewide land trust, to a national environment non-profit, to a global mining company and all things in between.
6. There are many stewardship activities that were completed, including 79 prescribed burns – a successful and productive burn season, especially in the southern part of the state.
7. Eleven threats cases were active during this period. I would encourage you to read the threats report carefully. Many are ongoing issues, and the report contains a simple update that I will not elaborate upon.
  - a. I would like to mention a significant oil spill in early March in Edwardsville, Illinois, from a ruptured pipeline, upstream from the Bohm Woods NP Complex, Madison County comprised of one IDNR-owned NP and three privately-owned NPs. This area also includes populations of the State-threatened Illinois chorus frog.

- i. INPC staff have worked with IDNR's Contaminant Assessment Section, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Marathon Oil Company and consultants to monitor water levels in the creek adjacent to the NP complex to either ensure the water levels are not high enough to enter the NPs or to add preventive/mitigation measures if warranted. It should be noted that the response was quick and well-coordinated, and weather and water conditions prevented widespread damage to the area of these preserves. There were environmental impacts, but the sites in INPC's system, at least at this point, are unaffected.
8. Heron Pond-Wildcat Bluff 50th Anniversary Celebration occurred in April
  - a. INPC was well represented at the event and co-hosted with IDNR, Friends of Illinois NPs and Friends of the Cache River Watershed.
  - b. Past Commissioner John Schwegman, Max Hutchison, and Andy West were featured speakers.
  - c. It was a beautiful day and an exceptional event. And it was powerful to listen to the history of the site and all the efforts that went into getting the site dedicated.
9. IDNR Director Callahan and Natural Heritage Division Chief Ann Holtrop, and I coordinated on a presentation at the Prairie State Conservation Coalition 2022 Annual Conference. The land trusts in Illinois are some of our best partners and it was nice to be able to speak to them.
10. I want to give a quick shout out to the Outdoor Illinois Journal. This has been mentioned before, but it continues to be a strong outlet for interest short articles that contain many contributions from staff. I would encourage you to get on their distribution list. It is online only.
11. Finally, I have been coordinating with Assistant Director John Rogner and staff within the Governor's office on new Commissioner appointments. It's anticipated that there will be at least three new Commissioners appointed by June 30, 2022. Commissioners being replaced in this round include Bill McClain, Donnie Dann, and Deb Stone. I cannot express enough gratitude for the extended service these commissioners have provide to us. They have provided expertise and friendship beyond measure."